THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

August/ September 2023 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

What If It Were Here?

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Editor's Note: On July 18, after US Representative Pramila Jayapal called Israel "a racist state," the US House of Representatives, by a vote of 412 to 9, passed a resolution standing by Israel. The following essay, with its facts and "what if" is offered to increase understanding of and empathy for Palestinians living in Israel or the Israeli-occupied territories.

Facts

In 1620, English Protestants settled in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Calling themselves pilgrims, they hoped to create what Conrad Cherry would later call, "God's New Israel." In time, the settlers grew in number and their conflicts with the indigenous people increased. Eventually, the settlers occupied the entire east coast. They declared independence from England in a document signed in 1776 by 55 Protestants and one Catholic. Although they declared all men equal, the new Americans denied freedom to slaves and indigenous people. In a process Americans considered their divinely-ordained, manifest destiny, Indian tribes were driven out of their homelands into impoverished reservations encompassing only 1% of the continental United States.

While slavery was abolished in the mid-19th century, white Anglo-Saxon men continued to dominate government and industry. Blacks, Catholics, Jews, Asians, Latinos, women, and others suffered economic and political oppression, but gradually gained rights and power. In 1960, the first Catholic was elected president and, forty-eight years later, the first Black. By 2022, the US Congress moved closer to representing the diversity of the American people with 153 women, 149 Catholics, 62 Blacks, 37 Jews, 15 Asians, 14 Latinos, 13 gays or bisexuals, 6 Native Americans, and 3 Muslims.

Not everyone celebrates an American rainbow of diversity. Eight progressive members of Congress, who are Muslim, Black, or Latino, nicknamed "the Squad," have faced considerable criticism, derision, and threats to their safety. Since immigration by non-Protestants to the US swelled in the 19th century, there have

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Mooning for the Planet

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

"The moon was out, or moons," began a *Boston Herald* account about eight activists who dropped their drawers in a gallery of the Massachusetts State House in Boston last June, interrupting a Senate session on a tax cut package. Emblazoned across the row of buttocks was the message: "Stop Passing Gas!" painted in bold black letters. Pink thongs covered all private parts, giving uniformity and, dare we say, a little pizzazz to this cheeky protest.

"You are a senator, not an ass. Why are you still passing gas?" the half-clad activists chanted from their gallery perch, and, "Come on, senators, you make the rules. Time to ban new fossil fuels."

Credit for the exposé goes to Extinction Rebellion, a politically non-partisan international movement that uses non-violent direct action to persuade governments to act justly on the climate and ecological emergency. London Catholic Worker and Passionist priest Martin Newell is a member.

Over the past year, Boston's XR rebels, as the activists call themselves, have staged a series of protests as part of their campaign for no new fossil fuel infrastructure in the state. In May, they peacefully occupied the House chambers for six hours. In February, they held a day-long sit-in at Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey's office, garnering some time with MA Climate Chief Melissa Hoffer but no concrete commitments. The XR campaign specifically calls for no new fossil fuel power plants, gas hook-

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What If?

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been 33 organizations in the United States dedicated to perpetuating or restoring white Anglo-Saxon domination. Some of those groups supported President Trump's attempt to overturn the 2020 election of the second Catholic to the White House.

Recently, the Anti Defamation League Center on Extremism reported that, n 2022, the United States had "the highest number of white supremacist propaganda incidents ADL has ever recorded."

What if

...white racist groups in the United States initiated a campaign to re-claim America by recruiting white Protestants to move here and thereby change the demographics?

Imagine it began with the legal purchase of property in regions dominated by people of color. As a movement, calling itself Nativism, grew, these acquisitions would occur more and more often under cover by shell companies, but eventually they'd arouse opposition, at first political and then violent. If white Protestant immigrants overtook diverse American communities, clashes might escalate until the United Nations stepped in to partition the United States into a Nativist homeland and a diminished America with Washington, DC left under international control. Unwilling to see any portion of the US become exclusively white territory, Americans, backed by Canada and Mexico would probably go to war with the Nativists. To everyone's surprise, the well-funded Nativists could end up controlling more land than the UN had given them. Under the new nation's flag, displaying a prominent cross, many Americans would be killed or driven out to become refugees. Their property would be confiscated by whites. Many non-white monuments and towns would be destroyed.

Once established, the Nativist state would move quickly to pass laws restricting the rights of the remaining non-white minority and approving automatic citizenship to white immigrants. The children of Americans who married non-whites would be denied citizenship. Americans would never be granted building permits, so any of their new homes could be legally demolished. The right of American refugees to return to their birthplaces would be categorically denied.

As soon as the Nativists amassed sufficient military might, they would seize the remainder of the country and annex Washington, DC, moves the international community would declare illegal. In the areas occupied by the Nativists, Americans would lose civil rights, freedom of movement, and economic clout. Americans could be imprisoned without

charge for years. White-only settlements would then proliferate in violation of international law. Nativist troops, deployed in the occupied territories, would protect white settlers and terrorize Americans. White-only highways would be constructed to connect the settlements with the official Nativist state. As the number of settlements grew, Americans would be crowded into impoverished cities.

Nativists, who believed that God had given them the entire country, would push harder and harder for the annexation of all occupied territory. Violent American resistance would increase, but, given the Nativists' military superiority, many times more Americans would be killed than Nativists.

Now imagine that Great Britain became the Nativists' largest ally, providing them unlimited military aid and political protection from international scrutiny. Britain would veto every UN resolution promoting American rights. Anyone who criticized the Nativists or advocated for the Americans would be deemed a religious bigot.

Although this scenario might sound far-fetched, it is the experience of Palestinians. Remember, Israel is a state with the Star of David on its flag, in a land that was the home, for over a 1,300 years, to more Moslems and Christians than Jews. B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization, now concurs with Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International that Israel is an apartheid state. In context, the near unanimous US support for Israel as a liberal democratic state is shocking.

Thank goodness there are many observant Jews in Israel and the United States who believe, as I and human rights advocates do, that diverse, democratic societies, respecting equal rights for all their people, are not only preferable to bigoted regimes, but also more likely to be peaceful, and long lasting. Ω

Vol. 40, No. 1 **THE** **August/September 2023**

CATHOLIC **RADICAL**

Published on 100% eucalyptus paper every two months by:

The Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker Community

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Founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and proclaiming peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome volunteers, letters, poetry, articles, artwork, and donations.

What Would You Do If?

by Joan Baez

Editor's Note: Reprinted From Theology Today*, 1969*.

Fred: OK. So you're a pacifist. What would you do if someone were, say, attacking your grandmother?

Joan: Attacking my poor old grandmother?

Fred: Yeah, you're in a room with your grandmother and there's a guy about to attack her and you're standing there. What would you do?

Joan: I'd yell, "Three cheers for Grandma!" and leave the room.

Fred: No, seriously. Say he had a gun and he was about to shoot her. Would you shoot him first?

Joan: Do I have a gun?

Fred: Yes

Joan: No. I'm a pacifist, I don't have a gun.

Fred: Well, I say you do.

Joan: All right. Am I a good shot?

Fred: Yes.

Joan: I'd shoot the gun out of his hand.

Fred: No, then you're not a good shot.

Joan: I'd be afraid to shoot. Might kill Grandma.

Fred: Come on, OK, look. We'll take another example. Say, you're driving a truck. You're on a narrow road with a sheer cliff on your side. There's a little girl sitting in the middle of the road. You're going too fast to stop. What would you do?

Joan: I don't know. What would you do?

Fred: I'm asking you. You're the pacifist.

Joan: Yes, I know. All right, am I in control of the truck?

Fred: Yes.

Joan: How about if I honk my horn so she can get out of the way?

Fred: She's too young to walk. And the horn doesn't work.

Joan: I swerve around to the left of her since she's not going anywhere.

Fred: No, there's been a landslide.

Joan: Oh. Well then, I would try to drive the truck over the cliff and save the little girl.

Silence

Fred: Well, say there's someone else in the truck with you. Then what?

Joan: What's my decision have to do with my being a pacifist?

Fred: There's two of you in the truck and only one little girl.

Joan: Someone once said if you have a choice between a real evil and a hypothetical evil, always take the real one.

Fred: Huh?

Joan: I said, why are you so anxious to kill off all the pacifists?

Fred: I'm not. I just want to know what you'd do if...

Joan: If I was in a truck with a friend driving very fast on a one-lane road approaching a dangerous impasse where a ten-month old girl is sitting in the middle of the road with a landslide on one side of her and a sheer drop-off on the other.

Fred: That's right.

Joan: I would probably slam on the brakes, thus sending my friend through the windscreen, skid into the landslide, run over the little girl, sail off the cliff and plunge to my own death. No doubt Grandma's house would be at the bottom of the ravine and the truck would crash through her roof and blow up in her living room where she was finally being attacked for the first, and last, time.

Fred: You haven't answered my question. You're just trying to get out of it...

Joan: I'm really trying to say a couple of things. One is that no one knows what they'll do in a moment of crisis and hypothetical questions get hypothetical answers. I'm also hinting that you've made it impossible for me to come out of the situation without having killed one or more people. Then you say, 'Pacifism is a nice idea, but it won't work'. But that's not what bothers me.

Fred: What bothers you?

Joan: Well, you might not like it because it's not hypothetical.

It's real. And it makes the assault on Grandma look like a garden party.

Fred: What's that?

Joan: I'm thinking about how we put people through a training process so they'll find out the really good, efficient ways of killing. Nothing incidental like trucks and landslides. Just the opposite, really. You know, how to growl and yell, kill and crawl and jump out of airplanes. Real organized stuff. Hell, you have to be able to run a bayonet through Grandma's middle.

Fred: That's something entirely different.

Joan: Sure. And don't you see it's much harder to look at, because it's real, and it's going on right now? Look. A general sticks a pin into a map. A week later a bunch of young boys are sweating it out in a jungle somewhere, shooting each other's arms and legs off, crying, praying and losing control of their bowels. Doesn't it seem stupid to you?

Fred: Well, you're talking about war.

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Mooning

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ups, gas pipelines, compressor stations, LNG production and transport facilities, gas stations, airports, or air fields.

"The excuses for authorizing new fossil fuel infrastructure are as naked as our butts and infinitely more offensive to basic human dignity," said Andrew, one of the June mooners. "With every part of my body and soul, I say: No New Fossil Fuel Infrastructure."

The baring of bottoms in Boston happened at the beginning of the hottest summer on record, one made hotter by the belching of CO_2 from gas guzzling cars, industries, and wars. We of the SS. Francis and Thérèse Catholic Worker applaud the XR rebels for their creativity and concern for the common good in this urgent time of heat domes, wildfires and floods. It's worth noting that "disrobing" appears high on the list in Gene Sharp's **198 Methods of Nonviolent Action**. Mooning could well be considered a refining of the tactic. Given our namesake, how can we not stand with the rebels who dropped their drawers for the sake of God's creation. It was St. Francis, after all, who publicly did the full monty, no pink thong here, to renounce the materialist path his father desired. So as they say in New Zealand, "Good on ya, XR rebels." May all of us hear your plea for action an respond. Ω

For more information: outreach.xrboston@proton.me, facebook.com/XRebelBoston, twitter.com/XRboston.

Cathedral Builders

by John Ormond

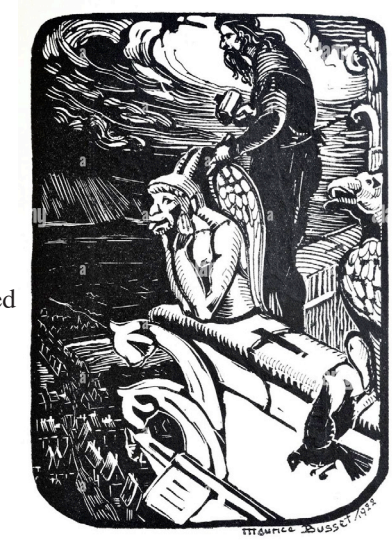
They climbed on sketchy ladders towards God,
With winch and pulley hoisted hewn rock into heaven,
Inhabited sky with hammers, defied gravity,
Defied stone, took up God's house to meet him,

And came down to their suppers and small beer,
Every night, slept, lay with their smelly wives,
Quarreled and cuffed the children, lied,
Spat, sang, were happy or unhappy,

And every day took to the ladders again,
Impeded the rights of way of another summer's
Swallows, grew greyer, shakier, became less inclined
To fix a neighbor's roof of a fine evening,

Saw naves spout arches, clerestories soar,
Cursed the loud fancy glaziers for their luck,
Somehow escaped the plague, got rheumatism,
Decided it was time to give it up,

To leave the spire to others, stood in the crowd
Well back from the vestments at the consecration,
Envied the fat bishop his warm boots,
Cocked up a squint eye and said, "I bloody did that." Ω



Stonemason carving gargoyle on Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral, by Maurice Bussett

Some time in your life
hope that you might see
one starved person.
The look on their face
when the bread finally arrives.
Hope that you might have baked it
or bought it
or even needed it yourself.

For that look on their face
for your hand touching theirs.
across a piece of bread
you might be willing
to lose a lot
or suffer a lot
or die a little
even. Ω

Dan Berrigan SJ

What to Do?

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Joan: Yes, I know. Doesn't it seem stupid to you?

Fred: What do you do instead, then? Turn the other cheek, I suppose.

Joan: No. Love thine enemy but confront his evil. Love thine enemy. Thou shalt not kill.

Fred: Yeah, and look what happened to him.

Joan: He grew up.

Fred: They hung him on a damn cross is what happened to him. I don't want to get hung on a damn cross.

Joan: You won't.

Fred: Huh?

Joan: I said you don't get to choose how you're going to die. Or when. You can only decide how you are going to live. Now.

Fred: Well, I'm not going to go letting everybody step all over me, that's for sure. Joan: Jesus said, "Resist not evil." The pacifist says just the opposite. He says to resist evil with all your heart and with all your mind and body until it has been overcome.

Fred: I don't get it.

Joan: Organized nonviolent resistance. Gandhi. He organized the Indians for nonviolent resistance and waged nonviolent war against the British until he'd freed India from the British Empire. Not bad for a first try, don't you think?

Fred: Yeah, fine, but he was dealing with the British, a civilized people. We're not.

Joan: Not a civilized people?

Fred: Not dealing with a civilized people. You just try some of that stuff on the Russians.

Joan: You mean the Chinese, don't you?

Fred: Yeah, the Chinese, try it on the Chinese.

Joan: Oh, dear. War was going on long before anybody dreamed up communism. It's just the latest justification for self-righteousness. The problem isn't communism. The problem is consensus. There's a consensus out there that it's OK to kill when your government decides who to kill. If you kill inside the country, you get in trouble. If you kill outside the country, right time, right season, latest enemy, you get a medal. There are about 130 nation-states, and each of them thinks it's a swell idea to bump off all the rest because he is more important. The pacifist thinks there is only one tribe. Three billion members. They come first. We think killing any member of the family is a dumb idea. We think there are more decent and intelligent ways of settling differences. And humanity had better start investigating these other possibilities because if we don't, then by mistake or by design, we will probably kill off the whole damn race.

Fred: It's human nature to kill. Something you can't change.

Joan: Is it? If it's natural to kill, why do men have to go into training to learn how? There's violence in human nature, but there's also decency, love, kindness. Humanity organizes, buys, sells, pushes violence. The nonviolent wants to organize the opposite side. That's all nonviolence is - organized love.

Fred: You're crazy.

Joan: No doubt. Would you care to tell me the rest of the world is sane? Tell me that violence has been a great success for the past five thousand years, that the world is in fine shape, that wars have brought peace, understanding, democracy, and freedom to humankind and that killing each other has created an atmosphere of trust and hope. That it's grand for one billion people to live off of the other two billion, or that even if it hadn't been smooth going all along, we are now at last beginning to see our way though to a better world for all, as soon as we get a few minor wars out of the way.

Fred: I'm doing OK.

Joan: Consider it a lucky accident.

Fred: I believe I should defend America and all that she stands for. Don't you believe in self-defense?

Joan: No, that's how the Mafia got started. A little band of people who got together to protect peasants. I'll take Gandhi's nonviolent resistance.

Fred: I still don't get the point of nonviolence.

Joan: The point of nonviolence is to build a floor, a strong new floor, beneath which we can no longer sink. A platform which stands a few feet above napalm, torture, exploitation, poison gas, nuclear bombs, the works. Give humanity a decent place to stand. We've been wallowing around in human blood and vomit and burnt flesh, screaming how it's going to bring peace to the world. We stick our head out of the hole for a minute and see a bunch of people gathering together and trying to build a structure above ground in the fresh air. "Nice idea, but not very practical," we shout and slide back into the hole. It was the same kind of thing when humans found out the world was round. We fought for years to have it remain flat, with every proof on hand that it was not flat at all. It had no edge to drop off or sea monsters to swallow up his little ship in their gaping jaws.

Fred: How are you going to build this practical structure?

Joan: From the ground up. By studying, experimenting with every possible alternative to violence on every level. By learning how to say "NO" to the nation-state, "NO" to war taxes, "NO" to military conscription, "NO" to killing in general, "YES" to cooperation, by starting new institutions which are based on the assumption that murder in any form is ruled out, by making and keeping in touch with nonviolent contacts all over the world, by engaging ourselves at every possible chance in dialogue with people, groups, to try to change the consensus that it's OK to kill.

Fred: It sounds real nice, but I just don't think it can work

Joan: You are probably right. We probably don't have enough time. So far, we've been a glorious flop. The only thing that's been a worse flop than the organization of nonviolence has been the organization of violence. Ω

Is God a Woman?

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Editor's note: In a June 6, 2023 National Public Radio interview, Hafsa Lodi said: "The Quran, the holy text of Islam, implies time and again that Allah has no gender.... But the Quran was revealed in Arabic, and linguistically, Allah is referred to as he.... So to hear Allah being referred to as she, at a time when Islamic feminism is gaining so much traction, is really revolutionary." The interview inspired us to reprint this article from The Catholic Radical *in 1986.*

For many of us in the Judeo-Christian tradition, there is no more thoroughly masculine character in our lives than God. After all, God is "Lord," "King," "Judge," "General," and "Father." Certainly, God must be a man. Perhaps it's not that simple.

If we look carefully at the Hebrew Scriptures, we see many non-macho images used for God. For example: 1 Kings depicts God coming to the prophet Elijah **"not in a great strong wind... not in an earthquake... not in a fire**," but "**in a still small voice**." Gentleness, even weakness, as in Isaiah's suffering servant texts, are frequent divine themes which run counter to ancient Semitic concepts of masculinity.

But even more surprising are the scriptural references to God in doubtlessly feminine terms, as in Psalm 131 where it says, "**Like a child quieted at its mother's breast: even so my soul**," or in Isaiah 66 where God says, "'**Shall I who bring you to birth, shut the womb?' says your God.... You shall be carried upon her hip, and dandled upon her knees. As one whom their mother comforts, so I will comfort you.**" Isaiah 49:14 also includes the lines, "**Zion says 'Yahweh has forsaken me'... Can a woman forget her baby, or disown the child of her womb?**" In fact, feminine references for God are in Jeremiah 31:20, Numbers 11:12, and in Isaiah 42:13-14, 46:3-4, and 63:15-16.

Unfortunately, most of the strongest descriptions of God as a woman have been obscured by sexist scriptural translations. This can be seen in Deuteronomy 32:18 where the literal translation reads, "**You were unmindful of the rock which bore you, and forgot the God who gave you birth**." In too many Bibles, the word "bore" is replaced with the masculine "begot." Hence, God our mother is transformed into God our father.

Detail of a larger painting by Harmonia Rosalez

In spite of the difficulties, though, an entire book of feminine images for God can still be found uncensored in most Bibles. Look for them in the Book of Wisdom. In it, Wisdom is described as "the holy spirit," (Wisdom 1:5) and always in feminine terms. Chapter seven, verse twenty-five reads:

"**She is a breath of the power of God, pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; hence nothing impure can find a way into her.... Although alone, she can do all; herself unchanging, she makes all things new. In each generation, she passes into holy souls, she makes them friends of God and prophets... she is indeed more splendid than the sun... she deploys her strength from one end of the earth to the other, ordering all things for good.**"

Immutable, omnipotent, omnipresent, and self-sufficient—this woman called "Wisdom" has characteristics Saint Thomas Aquinas tells us are proper to God alone.

In chapters 10 and 11, Wisdom is shown as acting in salvation history:

"**A holy people and a blameless race, this she has delivered from a nation of oppressors. She entered the soul of a servant of Yahweh, and withstood fearsome kings.... She brought them across the Red Sea, led them through the immensity of water, while she swallowed their enemies in the waves.**"

Not merely the inspirational virtue we call wisdom, these texts refer to a divine spirit active in the key moments of salvation history. She is called, "**a spirit intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, incisive, unsullied, loving, steadfast, dependable, unperturbed, and almighty,**" (Wisdom 10:22), and she is named by feminine pronouns no fewer than 93 tines!

The New Testament also directly contradicts the stereotype of a male God in the parables. Mark 13:33 says, "**The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour.**" This woman who initiates the rising of the reign of God could only be God. Luke's parable of the lost coins (Luke 15:8-10) portrays God hoping to reclaim lost sinners like a woman "**lighting a lamp... sweeping a house...and diligently seeking until she finds what was lost.**" And Luke 18:2-5 tells of a widow who, by her persistence, is able to wear down an unjust judge to obtain a fair verdict. The prophetic tradition of Amos and Hosea often identified God with the plaintiff in a court case. In the same way as this woman pleads to the judge for justice, God pleads with us to be just. Jesus was not shy about depicting God as a woman. Nor should we forget that the New Testament depicts Jesus, born of a woman, suffering

his crucifixion in the close company of women disciples, and first appearing to women after his resurrection. Would a male God give such significance to women in salvation history?

The idea of a feminine God didn't stop with the Scriptures. Julian of Norwich, in her **Revelations of Divine Love**, wrote at length about "God all-wise our kindly Mother." She believed femininity was essential to understanding the Trinity. Saints Francis of Assisi, Thérèse of Lisieux, and mystics like John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila all used feminine images to describe and relate to God.

Does this mean God is a woman? No, it does not, because, in spite of the feminine texts already cited, the Scriptures are still full of predominantly masculine references. Sexism in the biblical authors can discount some of them, but not all. For example, Jesus was undoubtedly a man, and He called God "Abba," a familiar form of our word "father." Unless we want to pick and choose our way through the Scriptures, the masculine and feminine references for God need to be blended together somehow. We need to do this cautiously, though, mindful of Saint Thomas Aquinas' warning against anthropomorphic reductions of God's essentially unfathomable nature. As Saint Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:12, "**Now we see as in a mirror dimly**," but only in the resurrection of the dead will we see God "**face to face**."

Some help in the area of God's sexuality can be found in how most Christians have come to deal with the question of God's race. Outmoded, racist notions of God as a white European or American have been replaced by an understanding that God encapsulates all races. In a mysterious way, God is black, brown, yellow, red, and white. The time is overdue for us to apply the same principle to God's gender because, if we are truly made in the image of God, as Genesis and the Psalms tell us, no one's being can be excluded. Indeed, Saint Paul says it well in Galatians 3:28, "**There is neither Jew, no Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus**."

Therefore, as one imperfect way to approach God more truthfully, the Saints Francis and Thérèse Catholic Worker prays to our Creator, both Father and Mother, and to our Savior, the Son of God, and to the Sanctifier, the Holy Spirit— a woman also called Wisdom. We are listening for more perfect language, but we can no longer pray to a god who is only male. Ω

Letters

Friends,
On July 7, Joe Biden announced that $800 million of "cluster bombs" will be sent to Ukraine for their counter-offensive efforts against Russia because the US has millions of these horrendous weapons in its stockpile. The US last used cluster bombs in 2003 in Iraq where 13,000 were deployed. The delivery of cluster bombs to Ukraine will escalate the conflict when what is needed is the opposite.

The 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions which "prohibits the use, production, transfer, and stockpiling of these weapons," has been signed by 123 countries. The US, Russia, and Ukraine have not signed on. According to the Cluster Munition Coalition, 99% of the global stockpile has been eliminated.

Cluster bombs break apart in the air, then release hundreds of "bomblets" affecting an area up to 3 football fields in size. Human Rights groups consider them "inherently indiscriminate" because they cannot distinguish between civilian and military targets.

Cluster bombs are diabolical gifts that keep giving: Up to 40% fail to discharge and, for years, kill and main civilians, one-third of them children. Russia used them in Afghanistan in the 1980s (we dropped more than 1,200 there in 2001-2002). As a result, the Afghan countryside is considered one of the most heavily mined places in the world.

Please continue to oppose intolerable things done in our names.

Pat Ferrone
Needham, Massachusetts

Blessings, Scott & Claire,
In recent excellent issues, I liked Patience Whitman's poem "Fedora."

Claire, your latest venture [to Ukraine] was daring and beautiful.

Joan Thomas
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Scott & Claire,
The article "Authentic Love" by Julia Occhiogrosso was wonderful! She gets it exactly right. "Here I am not speaking of a sentimental, warm, fuzzy, make-everything-okay love, but rather a love strong enough to forfeit my need to be admired, to be right, to be needed, or to be in control. A love that is strong enough to die a little in the exchange." It put me in mind of St. Paul's ode to love in 1 Cor.13. "**If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.**"

How often I feel humiliated by my failure to love this way which is really just my childish desire to be admired, and so on. And yet what else is worth doing?

Paul del Junco
Toronto, Canada

Catholic Worker Calendar

August 8— Vigil for Nuclear Disarmament: Between the 78th anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, please join us in appealing for the US to sign and ratify the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Lincoln Square, Worcester, 3:30- 4:30 PM.

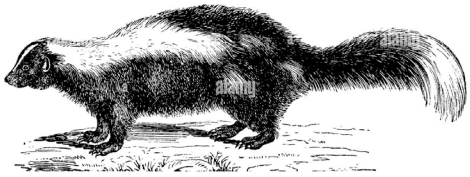
August 9 & 23, September 6 & 20 — Evening Prayer: Please join us for prayer & Taizé chant. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow. 7 PM.

September 14— Vigil to Remove ROTC from Holy Cross College- Please join us on the feast of the Triumph of the Holy Cross in front of Dinand Library for the annual vigil to remove military training. 11:30 AM-12:30 PM.

Mason Street Musings

Mason Street felt especially convivial earlier this week. Angie and Lucy's husband, neighbors from across the street, gave friendly waves as I swept the front porch. Toni, an elderly Vietnamese gentleman, stopped for garden talk during my morning spritzing of the basil with homemade insecticide. Japanese beetles are chomping the small crop he grows in the back of his cottage on Mason Court. At nine each night, with flashlight in hand, Toni plucks off the bugs.

I am willing to leave the beetles for the young skunk who nightly feasts on the rotting stump of our Norwegian Maple, the very same maple that shed a limb during a summer storm in 2015. The massive limb crushed our Prius and nearly killed me just as I was trying to move the car away from flying branches. Wayne, a specialist in urban wildlife control, told me there was no point in laying traps for the skunk. As soon as we caught and relocated one, another will come. "Best to let Mother Nature take her course," he said. "Skunks are moving across the city right now."



The humans are migrating as well. After a year of residence at 1 Mason Court, the Afghan brothers moved out last week-end leaving behind seventeen bulging bags of trash and a worn sofa. The brothers dutifully hauled the stuff onto Mason Street for pick-up, not realizing that trash set out too early lures critters and urban dumpers. Instead of indifference or finger-pointing, Mason Street solved the problem collaboratively and with a bit of mercy for young people who fled their homeland trashed by war. Marcos, a new landlord on the street, lugged the trash pile back to the court to keep the sidewalks clear. Our guest John then brought the bags out again in time for the Wednesday pick-up.

Michael Hargrove, a teacher at a local high school, came to cart away the sofa. He taught the youngest Afghan brother and had referred the family to this rental. "The kid worked 50 hours a week *while* he was in school," Michael said. The boy's sister, still in Kabul, recently called her siblings in America to let them know their youngest brother was dead and their father missing. "Imagine living with that," Michael said. I can't.

Mason Street is no Pleasantville. We have our troubles. Winter brings parking squalls, and in the summer, motorcycles roar up and down the road at all hours. Earlier this year, we suffered the moods of our former guest C. Refusing offers at a local shelter, he slept on the stoop of the vacant property next door. On his bad days, C would stand on the street and loudly berate us for hosting immigrants. Late at night, he menaced Angie and her sons with racist threats. Weeks ago, someone lobbed a Molotov cocktail in the small camper of Lucy's husband. Had it not been for an alert from our Brazilian neighbors, the damage could have been serious.

It's the absence of a bunker mentality among my neighbors that makes me glad to live in this nook of the city where together we reckon with migrating skunks, trash control, a parking shortage, and what to do when someone, or something, goes ballistic in the middle of the night. Trouble can bring people together, a good truth to remember as we collectively face the climate change emergency.

We were remarkably blessed throughout the Covid crisis by generous donations. Like everyone these days, we are paying more for groceries. Many of our donors are retiring or passing away. We are by no means in terrible shape, but could use support covering expenses like the printing and mailing of this newsletter.

Pax et bonum, everyone. Ω

Claire

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